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The Right of Freedom

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CRUSHING DEFEAT OF THE PARLIAMENT

Pavel Daneika – a delegate of the thirteenth Supreme Soviet. The electoral district where he was elected covers a half of the Minsk Centralny District. He is a member of the Political Council of the United Civic Party. Used to be a head of the United Civic Party city organisation.

As a delegate of the thirteenth Supreme Soviet I worked a little bit less than one year. But I still consider myself to be a delegate. The real parliamentary work lasted a bit less than one year. Everything was rather difficult to do: there were no resources for this work, no assistants, no information, no possibilities to make laws. In order to make it impossible for MPs to carry out their activities Belarusan authorities cut down all the resources for us. They blocked all our activities which could lead towards creation of a new legislation, towards its change or its improvement.

As far as impeachment is concerned I did my best to get any positive results. I took part in these events. But looking back now I understand that any other outcome but unsuccessful there could not have been. And at that time it was clear too. But one should not admit such thoughts in his mind because it impossible to fight if you do not believe you will win a victory. But still it was rationally understood that this campaign would be unsuccessful . It is connected with the country itself, with that parliament which really used to be at that moment. What was going on in Belarus? Although we are trying to turn from soviet people into normal ones. It is rather difficult and long way as Belarus was deprived of its elite – an elite in a proper sense of this word – officials , writers, artists, engineers, businessmen in short those who would ready to take responsibility for the country's fate upon themselves. Usually it used to be people appointed by the authorities. And they felt just small parts of certain big mechanism. So this elite did not have a sense of responsibility for the country.

In general, if we look at the thirteenth Supreme Soviet there were just some tens of MPs, more exactly 2-3 tens but with many reservations, who openly disputed the ideas of Belarusan statehood, independence and main freedom for all. The rest were those who could and felt so but at the same time were afraid to say it. And this year of work in the parliament was the year of waking up of many people who dared to say that they were ready to take responsibility for the country and its people. For me it was the most surprising thing because my attitude to many of them had always been a very sceptic one. Suddenly I saw people who managed to overcome their fear because they realised their responsibility and took the courage upon themselves to stand up in open opposition to the regime. As compared with my position theirs was more unfavourable because they were

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CHRONICLE

On November 16, 1998, at Partyzansky district court there was a trial participants of the November 5 trade union meeting. A builder Siargei Matskoits was charged. Judge Mikalai Trubnikau brought a verdict – 6 days of administrative detention.

On November 17, at Partyzansky district court an observer of the Human Rights Center "Viasna-96" Vadzim Kanapatski stood trial. He was accused in accordance with art.167, part 2 of the Administrative Code (breaking the order of mass actions). The verdict was 15 days of administrative detention. On this very day there was a trial on the Secretary of BPF "Adradzhennie" Vyachaslau Siuchyk, who sentenced to 15 days of administrative detention. The court hearings on the cases of independent journalist Valery Shchukin and editor of the trade union newspaper "Rabochy" Victar Ivashkevich were postponed.

On November 18, general director of the Minsk Automobile Plant (MAP) K.Shaulouski signed a decree № 531 on banning the distribution of leaflets and other means of information. The reason for that was that "unknown" people brought and distributed at the MAP territory printed announcements without any permission (printed leaflets of the Free Trade Union of metallurgists are meant). These leaflets as the director says "were found scattered in the entrance lodge and in the premises". The director bans all the workers, public organizations which are located on the plant's territory to distribute announcements and printed or copied by any other means of Mass Media (leaflets, newspapers, announcements and other issues) in the places, which are not aimed for it as well as to spread them sections plant's premises and on its territory in general.

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Crushing Defeat of the Parliament



Pavel Daneika – a delegate of the thirteenth Supreme Soviet.

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mainly collective farm chairmen – people who worked for state institutions. For them defeat meant considerably more than for me. Non the less, I was very surprised when collective farm chairmen – the agrarian party – found itself the most determined in the struggle against Lukashenka. When we look at those who put their signatures under Lukashenka's impeachment we will see the representatives of some parties, among them were the following factions – the Civic Action, social-democrats, the Agrarian Party and communists. 9 communists out of 44 signed it; more than a half out of 50 members of agrarian faction put its signatures under impeachment; the Civic Action having 17 delegates picked some 30 signatures. the agrarian faction made up a backbone, in short a considerable part of those who were in favour of Lukashenka's impeachment.

But it was a way and it is known a way is not always a firm position there are always doubts. And this bulk of doubts and mistakes regarding to impeachment made it improbable. For the majority of delegates bad role played their soviet consciousness. It means the aim always justify the means. We say, of course there is a law but now we can break it. In case we do not break it we will lose something more important. The first example of such a decision is a refusal to conduct by-elections to the Supreme Soviet till the end – till the complete number of delegates which was 260. The MPs had broken the Constitution. Once more they did the same when they approved of appointing and discharging of different officials in spite of the legislature. After that there were lots of senseless concessions, which did not lead to anywhere but just gave Lukashenka additional points. As a result we came up to the impeachment not having enough resources for political struggle. This was a preamble to that day when a part of MPs decided and signed up the impeachment.

But here the problems began. And these problems again were connected with a soviet approach in mind of our people. The weak point of Belarusan democratic movement is personal arrogance which is above real business. We were taught in the Soviet Union that we were collective people by comparison with western countries where an individualism was flourishing. But in practice everything was quite the contrary. In the West people are more collective. When every individual realises if his personal goal breaks the common interests and even he or she is able to achieve it he will lose everything. People can put off their personal pride and to set about joint activities. Soviet people do not see any other tasks apart from their personal pride, their own careers. And is very difficult for them to postpone their own interests and in spite of them to do something joint. I would even say that there is a lack of patriotism. That means state interests have always been secondary business. They are used as a screen to win on one's own, to fall upon "manger" (in former Soviet Union –power). It is quite absurd. And this typical feature of behaviour badly made here at the last stage of the process. They began to divide power before being entitled to it. A part of delegates inspired and drunk by their resolution had already thought the victory was in their pocket. At this point a definition who will be the first began.

The electoral district of mine is a place in Belarus where the Lukashenka's Constitution got the least number of voices at the 1996 referendum – no more than 20 per cent. I am very proud of it. That means I worked not in vain.

Than a ridiculous struggle inside of the group began. It was ridiculous because there was no object of partition.

Impeachment was an attempt to make a silent soviet overturn. When people came to the Independence Square to support this process a governing body of the thirteenth Supreme Soviet felt frightened. Their first reaction was: "Why did they come? We will do everything on our own". The delegates wanted to people to go home. Even to bring out loudspeakers to the Square required some struggle in the Supreme Soviet, what would make it easier to understand what the delegates were speaking about. And later on this indecisiveness and unwillingness to appeal to people told on constantly. For example, when Mr.Ganchar was being driven out from the Central Electoral Commission. Evidently, I was the first who came to Ganchar and the last who left him. There was a chance to keep the Central Electoral Commission under the Supreme Soviet's control if the delegates decided to let supporters in the location and blocked it with the help of those some hundred people who gathered nearby. but the delegates again were afraid to repulse and defend the position they had taken. As a result, a key position in the process of impeachment was lost. But there still was a hope.

We expected possible provocations. In the Parliament were organised duties. But the situation "was given out" by the Sharetsky signature under so-called "agreement". It is just impossible to understand this document. Frankly speaking, when I saw him, the first thought was he had been paid 2-3 mln dollars. I was shocked by this signing. It was impossible to understand why it was necessary to put a signature under the agreement which to a considerable extent worsened the situation as compared with that one which was before. I think neither Sharetsky nor Kalyakin (he also took place in signing) even till today can not explain why they did so. In the morning next day they both tried to explain to me that it was a great success. But to my mind it was a defeat much worse than in case this signing had not taken place at all.

This signing simply had broken the delegates particularly those, who was uncertain whether to come out against lawlessness or not. They did not see a possibility of further struggle. This has dramatically changed the situation. Fighting spirit to struggle till the end had suddenly disappeared. All them simply went out and refused the struggle. The situation was simply foolish. What happened was beyond any logic. I think Sharetsky himself was very upset. We should stand up till the end. There was a referendum which was considered to be a consultative one. Nothing would not have changed if it officially had been lost for us. But Sharetsky by his signature as though took aside previous activities and showed that we were ready to make compromise. As a result of this Lukashenka completely seized power in the country. To stay on positions of lawfulness and to force Lukashenka to make this referendum illegitimate even this minimum result was cancelled by Sharetsky's signature. However, so far as the legitimate body of power – the thirteenth Supreme Soviet – remains it has a chance to play contentedly significant systematising and uniting role and can raise questions today about illegitimate president and the legitimate Supreme Soviet. That was just a reason to preserve it. In case there is no serious pressure of the public upon the authorities then next year presidential elections will not take place. One thing is clear enough – they, who today are in power, of their own free will won't give it up and will strive to retain the power any way.

Pavel DANEIKA
(written by Tatsiana Linnik)

Statement of the Human Rights Center "Viasna-96".

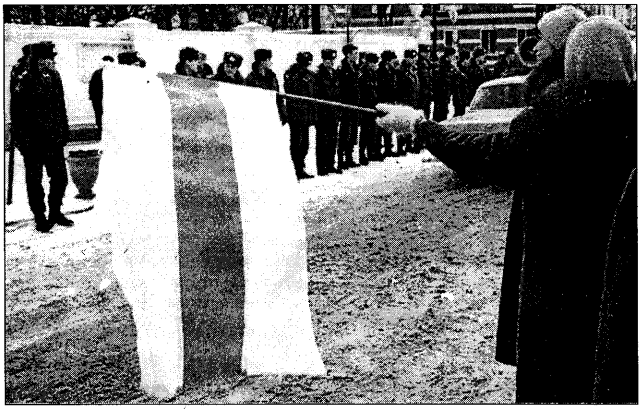
Minsk, November 23, 1998.

Violations of human rights in Belarus have become an "integral" part of Lukashenka's ruling of the country. It proves that Lukashenka and his government openly ignore international norms in the field of human rights aimed at promoting and encouraging respect for human rights. And moreover, they ignore the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They regularly violate the right to peaceful assembly and association.

Almost every action, even those authorized by the state, is accompanied by power abuse. Human Rights movement, which is said to be an integral part of civic society, is under the strong pressure of the authorities.

On November 9, the court gave a warning to the leader of the Human Rights Center "Viasna-96" Ales Bialatsky for taking part in the November 5 action, staged by the Free Trade Union (FTU). He was present there as an observer. The militia officers were called to the trial as witnesses, who gave false testimony, saying that A.Bialatsky was marching in the column of demonstrators and was shouting loudly. On November 17, 1998, the Partyzansky district court sentenced the observer of the Human Rights Center "Viasna-96" Vadzim Kanapatsky to 15 days of administrative detention. During the trade union action on November 5, Vadzim Kanapatsky performed his duties – to observe the activities of the militia officers in civil clothes and in uniform as well as the activities of demonstrates. Although in accordance with the charter the main goal of the Human Rights Center is "to study the state of public associations and to observe human rights in Minsk, to organize public research, sociological and human rights monitoring". So, the presence of the observers at the trade union action on November 5 was provided by the charter. It is not the first case when the observers of the human rights organizations are being subjected to repression. In 1998 the observers of the Belarusan Helsinki Committee – Markusheusky, Chyrvony, Valodzin were constantly detained by force. The fact that the observers of the human rights organizations are prosecuted for showing up in the action makes their activities hard and dangerous. We are strongly against anti-human rights activities of all institutions of power in the country.

Adopted by the Council of the Human Rights Center "Viasna-96".



Political Emigration

Two young Belarusan Igar Lazarchuk and Marat Kulbitsky asked for political asylum in Belgium. They left in Minsk their families and little children. They explain that they are politically pursued in their country and can not find any job. To be dismissed in Belarus for the fact that the militia spotted your face on the video-tape among the participants of the opposition march or meeting is quite easy. There are a lot of such cases. The desire of the authorities to make obstacles for the citizens who have opposite view points when applying for a job can be illustrated by the fate of the former delegate of the 12 Supreme Soviet Siargey Antonchyk as well as the delegates of the legitimate Supreme Soviet. People whose names are less known to the public face the same difficulty. The doors of state institutes are closed for them. Private sector in the country is under the increasing pressure – mostly economical. Marat Kulbitsky and Igar Lazarchuk are famous for their actions on the 80-anniversary of KGB. To protest against the celebration of this professional holiday of KGB officers, Igar and Marat wreath of barbed wire to the monument to Phelix Dziarzhynsky. They were arrested for this action. This summer, when in June they adopted a bill on protecting the honor and dignity of the president, Igar Lazarchuk was taken into the local police station by strangers in civil clothes. They turned out to be sharp-sighted officers of "Belarusan regiment". They did not like by chance dropped talk of that guy with his friends over a cup of coffee in a cafe. Even the police officers were indignant by this act of service "diligence". How many Belarusans have asked for political asylum in the western countries for the last years? There is no such data – we may only approximately judge by the number of cases reported in press. These are only a few names: Zyanon Paznyak and Syargey Navumchyk (1996), a student from Brest Yan Churilovich (at the end of 1996), the whole family from Palesse, which asked for refuge in Norway (the beginning of 1997), a student of the Belarusan State University Alina Belskaya (1997), a Belarusan diplomat in Paris (1997), a citizen of Polatsk Yuras Maroz (1998), a citizen of Minsk Alyaxey Koval (the beginning of 1998) and Ales Mukhin (August, 1998).

One can add some more names to this list, to remember of concrete names, dates, circumstances. But if to make a call to the Belarusan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and ask about political emigrants, you will understand: there exist no such emigrants in Belarus for the officials. President Lukashenka remembers only of two of all these incidents: the first one when he called the American authorities not to offer political asylum for Z.Paznyak and the second one when he was greatly surprised at the fact that the Belarusan family had changed Belarus for Scandinavia.

Many of young citizens of Belarus think of leaving the country. The youth looks for prospects in life, the possibility to fulfill themselves. People of different ages – have no possibility to make money legally. No wonder, the only way they see is to emigrate abroad – to study or to work. More and more people emigrate rather for economical reasons than political. It happens because the most courageous people express their protest they are pursued, but all people have to think over daily bread. Some young people confess sincerely: "How to love the Motherland, when it is unable to provide you with food staff, unable to protect its citizen, unable to give its citizen a chance to make money!" Talented artists, painters, scientists, businessmen, reporters, financists, - all of them abandon our country, mostly for western countries, rarely for Moscow. It happens that emigrants from Belarus don not reach western or even central Europe, staying in the neighboring Ukraine. In any case there is brain drain in Belarus nowadays like it used to be in the former USSR in the period of stagnation.

The most active, talented people make their contribution to the industry, science, culture, public life of other countries. People who have technical or high education are ready to change their profession even for less prestigious, but somewhere abroad! "We are not afraid of working" – says on of the workers, who earns 20 dollars per month at the plant. – "But we want to be paid for it". One of my acquaintances, who is a nurse and whose salary is even less is also ready to work in any country in the West at any post. Her only fear is to be cheated. There are cases when the girls from the countries of the former Soviet Union were cheated, promising to provide them with a job but later they took away their documents and sent them to public houses. But it is not the topic of our present talk, but if nothing changes for better in Belarus either in economy or in the field of human rights, the best part of our nation will be beyond the border of our republic. For participating in the march, for the writing: "Long live Belarus!", for insulting the authorities in the line for bread.

P.S. Belarus has kept secret all the data connected with immigration. Not a single department can give you true-to-life information about it.

Tatsiana SNITKO

"The Situation in Russia Is Becoming like that in Belarus..."

Valeria Navadvorskaya – is one of those people who is not in the habit of hiding her own view points, who is fighting for "your and our freedom". It is seen, heard and appreciated. At the end of 1996 for making a speech at the meeting, a lawsuit was brought against her in Moscow – in Minsk a political prisoner from Ukraine Andrey Shaptytsky went on a hunger-strike in defence of Navadvorskaya.

There is a Salavetsky Stone – a monument to the victims of Bolshevism – in front of the former building of KGB in Moscow. There is no monument to Dziarzhynsky, but if you have a look at Russian , you have such an impression that soon it will be erected. On November 7, I visited this place twice. On the hill, left from the "iron Phelix" near Lubyanka and around it, I met people not only with red flags but also with fascist badges on leather jackets. Some people congratulated each other on the occasion of "Great October", others called to bring Yeltsin and Yavlinsky to a trial, still others sold freely the newspapers "Limonka", "Zavtra" ("Tomorrow"); "I am Russian", "Russian style" – all in all 15 different newspapers with different political views.

The officers of Moscow militia had no grudge against the participants. There were no militiamen with cameras. Only in Minsk "Sovetskaya Byelorussia" claims that Russian FSB officers pursues the opposition. The meeting of Zuganov's Bolsheviks, Limonov's national-Bolsheviks with the participation of the part of "barkashovtsy" (Russian National Unity gathered on the occasion of "the holiday of revolution" approximately 5-7 times more citizens of Moscow than the action of commemoration, staged in the evening on the same day by the Democratic Union (in this action also participated the activists of anti-fascist youth movement – the guests of the two Minsk Chernobyl rallies). Democrats called all progressive parties to unite, but it seems that Russia failed to hear them. Communist speeches in the morning could be heard in the neighboring districts of Lubyanka, the Democratic Union, seemed to have failed to find money to rent amplifying equipment. The holiday meeting was featured several times on TV, but they said nothing about the commemoration meeting near Moscow "Kurapaty". My Russian colleagues went to their editorial offices in the evening and they were not sure that the material about the alternative action will be printed in the newspapers or shown on TV.

We spoke with the leader of the Democratic Union Valeriya Navadvorskaya when the candles near the Salavetsky Stone were burning out and the democratically-oriented youth was marching in several hundreds in the center of Moscow.

T.S. Valeria Illinichna, do you think it is possible that in the future Belarus and Russia would integrate into one state? Bolsheviks and Lukashenka so widely speak about it.

V.N. It is quite possible because the craziest ideas of Bolshevism have won in Belarus and are gaining victory in Russia – it is real that something will be added to this Union. Some of them will be forced and other will do it of their free will. Everything that has not got a stable position and is ready to be taken up. Kazakhstan is in such a situation. Also Iran, Iraq, Serbia.

T.S.: You say "forcefully" – so you do not eliminate the possibility of using forcible methods to unite, for instance, military methods, do you?

V.N.: Certainly, I do not eliminate such a possibility, because some wild communists are able to use force. I do not think they can resort to force against Baltic states – this time they would be shown their place there. But they may do it against Ukraine. It depends on the degree of the capacity to resist. Of Moldova, for example. Makashov, for instance, has the intention to stop only in Budapest, not even in Kiev.

T.S.: Can it be possible that the public opinion in Russia will support intentions like this?

V.N.: Here the public opinion does not reflect the public activities and by no means they correspond. Here the public opinion has always been multiplied by the public passiveness. Before 1917 the situation was alike: a lot of newspapers were published, there was a great number of political parties: liberals, social-democrats and very-very talkative. When their time came to show



what they were worth, they turned out not to be able to act. So, do not be misled by the incredible number of Russian newspapers and range of political parties here.

T.S.: The situation in Belarus is compared by many with that in Germany in 1933. What can you say about the situation in Russia from this point of view?

V.N.: Well, I think, you are somewhere in 1935... And we – somewhere in 1933.

T.S.: Do you see a way-out for your country?

V.N.: Someone in your country has already found a way-out – they have blown up a monument to Lenin. That is one of the variants of how events can progress. Maybe.

T.S.: What part of Russian citizens are influenced by the ideas of Lukashenka, who regularly flies round Russian province.

V.N.: As a rule, all socialists choice followers, all "sovki" ("sovok" stands for a "Soviet Union" and is used in negative meaning) – are Lukashenka's supporters. That is why they are much more in number than you think, and moreover – individuals are not the case. The case is that they do not necessarily have to elect an outstanding despot and tyrant and what is more – of a foreign origin. Here the collective Politburo members, more worn and of Brezhnev's type can be found. One can always speak out for them, or just not resist. That is why you may not be even asked to speak out.

T.S.: Moscow official circles' view-point on Mr. Lukashenka's "prospects for the Kremlin" is not very clear.

V.N.: This variant is possible but not obligatory, and it won't change anything for Belarus. Whether Lukashenka is in the Kremlin or in Minsk – there is nobody to show him his place.

The resistance against Lukashenka's intentions and governing elite is practically defeated. There will be no obstacles from Moscow – he will be allowed to do anything he wishes.

T.S.: But there is still a possibility of resistance from above. I watch certain radicalization of views in Belarus – especially among young peo-

ple.

V.N.: That is pretty good, let them hold out – you can see better. But I do not see any mass resistance yet.

T.S.: There is no mass resistance. Many people are just afraid to get to prison.

V.N.: If a lot of people are frightened the situation does not change. It changes when they stop being frightened. This fright can be overcome only by your own example. For political leadership it is better not to ask for political asylum in the West, as Paznyak did, but to be the first to protest and to show their own example.

T.S.: There are people who do something like that! But why does Russian TV and press show Belarusan events in such a unilateral way and so little? It is such a contrast to the situation two years ago!

V.N.: Two years ago there were no communists in our government and Yeltsin was not under home arrest. The situation in Russia is becoming like that in Belarus. And, certainly, Russian TV soon is going to react to it the same way it does towards the situation in Minsk.

T.S.: So, then reports from pastures and pig-farms are awaiting for you!

V.N.: Right. It is clear, we are unlikely to see it, as Lephortovo prison is not equipped with TV sets. This is a peculiarity of KGB prison: in other prison TV sets are allowed but not there. That is a very old prison and it is impossible to equip it with TV cable. That is why, fortunately, we won't have a chance to see potato-gathering combines.

T.S.: Is it really so sombre?

V.N.: Exactly! And it is not going to lighten up, until people see this gloom. Until they want to see it.

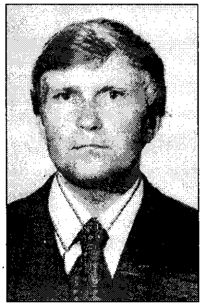
T.S.: Valeriya Illinichna! I know you were born in Minsk and I have brought you cards with sights of it. They have been issued recently. If one never seen Minsk he/she could think everything in the city was built by Bolsheviks!

V.N.: In this case you had better left it for yourself! I know Minsk, I have been there lots of times, and then, Minsk is not Garodnya (Grodno). I think we will soon find our Minsk just here, not leaving Moscow. We even do not need to go somewhere!

Interviewed by

Tatsiana SNITKO

"I Felt Completely Deprived of My Rights..."



These are the words of the man who tried to defend his right for decent life in court, supported by the law. On November 11,1998, Aleg Yak'yan, an engineer was dismissed from work from the "Gorizont Plant". That was the result of his struggle for his right for the wages, that could provide normal living.

In the middle of February, 1997, after 24-year work as an engineer and 11-year work at SRIDT (Science and Research Institute of Digital Television) "Gorizont", I noticed with indignation that my wages had become almost 2 times lower and was equal only half a minimum consumer budget, that was lower than the officially recognized poverty margin.

I got interested: what had happened? As a result I received an unofficial explanation, that the Plant management always does it if it wants the person to quit: I went to the Institute's trade union. The union's leader explained, that as the volume of work on the measurements of TV sets' parameters "had decreased considerably" I had to be moved to another department, but with the same beggar's wages (about 30$). Not having agreed with that, I kept being interested in the reasons for such a miserable level of wages, and again I got an oral answer, that the Institute's revenues were decreasing – that was the main reason for the drop of wages.

Without my agreement and any explanations the administration moved me into another sector, where a trade unions meeting was immediately held. In the report of this meeting it was stated that I "have a negative influence on the moral climate in our working group".

My wages remained on the same beggar's level that is why at my request the Free Trade Union of Belarus sued the Institute's administration.

That the wages cannot provide independent and worthful decent existence, as it is stated in paragraph 10 article 6 of the Employment Code. The court declined the claim and in the resolution on the case 2-661-93 dated 13/04/1998 it was stated that the wages had been calculated in accordance with the Employment Law, on the minimum wages basis. It is worth mentioning that in court the Institute trade union's leader was defending the administrations' interests. But 14/07/1998 Minsk Court closed the case referring to the fact that the wages are to be determined under the agreement between the administration and trade unions. The Court "did not notice" that the point of the claim was not wages' determining but theirs disparity with the Law. Minsk City Court Board left this resolution unchanged.

This official unions and employment arguments commission do not only carry out their functions properly but vigorously help administration violate legal rights of employees. The court system contributes to that qualifying the case as referring to the category of mere employment arguments and not of human rights.

Aleg YAK'YAN

Events, Facts, Comments

(continued from p.1)

To put any announcement in a specially aimed place one have to get a written permission by the deputy director on information. As to the people ,who will break the law, they will be detained and will be brought to the sentry-post (together with the distributed material) to make a report. The deputy general director D.Kraieuski is responsible for execution of this decree.

On November 20, the organizing Committee of the Belarus Democratic Forces Congress sent a letter to the head of National State Radio and TV Broadcasting Company Rygor Kissel. The authors of the letter demand to the representatives of the opposition an air: "We suggest that by December 10 – the 50-anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – you will have decided to give us an air on the State television and radio for organizing a live daily program "Hours of democracy", where the representatives of the opposition would be able to air their views on the situation in the country".

On November 20, the unprecedented permission to hold a picket in the town of Gantsavichy, Brest region, was banned. "The permission to hold a picket" was issued by the Gantsavichy City Executive Committee on December 11, 1997. It says that its declarant Mikalai Zanka had a right to hold pickets every day from 8 o'clock till 22 o'clock. Mikalai Zanka has used this right twice. In 1997 he organized a picket in defense of political prisoners and on November 24, 1998, a picket against anti-Constitutional 1996 year coup d'etat. Afterwards the Gantsavichy City Executive Committee abolished its permission to hold pickets. The City Executive Committee decree, dated 20.11.1998, says "to entrust the department of architecture and city-building to find a place for pickets somewhere outside the town".

(to be continued on p.6)

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EVENTS, FACTS, COMMENTS

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On November 24, in Minsk there was a meeting aimed at protesting against the anti-Constitutional 1996 coup d'etat. On November 24, 1996, on the day of so-called country-wide referendum as a result of all-nation voting A.Lukashenka refused the Constitution of 1994 and illegally adopted a new one, which gave him plenary powers. On November 24, 1998,in Minsk there was a march and rally which reminded of that event. The declarant of the action was the Belarusan Social-Democratic Party (Narodnaya Gramada). The March started from Yakub Kolas Square. The police had been uninterruptedly informing the participants (2.000 people) in rally of the fact that walking on the roadway Skaryna Avenue was prohibited (but was not against the decision of the Minsk City Executive Committee). Under the slogans "Long live Belarus!" and "Freedom to political prisoners!" the machers reached the Opera House. There was a meeting, during it the parliamentarians of the illegally-banned thirteenth Supreme Soviet as well as the representatives of "Narodnaya Gramada" and the Belarusan Popular Front "Adradzhennie" made speeches. The meeting commenced with a minute of silence to honor the recently assassinated prominent Russian democrat Calina Staravoitava. The parliamentarian Galina Graznova reminded that in November 1996 Galina Staravoitava was the only among the Russian politicians to come to Minsk to support the Belarusans, who had tried to resist the anti-Constitutional coup d'etat on those tragic day of 1996.

On November 24, there was next in turn sitting of the thirteenth Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Belarus. The Supreme Soviet discussed the political situation in the country. The parliamentarians stated that the next presidential elections are to be held not later than May 20, 1999. Uladzimir Nistsiuk the MP the twelfth Supreme Soviet, a member of the Social-Democratic Party said: "Today we have appointed the date of a parliamentary session, which at the beginning of 1999 will tell to the Belarusan population and to the whole world as well the date of presidential elections in 1999. Our decision does have a future!"

On November 24, in New-York there was the 8th award ceremony organized by the Journalists Protecting Committee. Pavel Sharamet was granted this prestigious an International Free Press award for his work in the "Belaruskaya delovaya gazeta" and as an ORT correspondent. Pavel Sharamet could not be present at the ceremony in New-York because Belarusan Authorities made the decision to ban his leaving from the country. In the letter, got by Pavel Sharamet, the Ministry of Internal Affairs announced that he had no right to leave the country till January 28,1998, when the sentence time, brought by Ashmyany court, was expired.

On November 24, the Belarusan authorities refused an entry visa to German Green Party member, a member of the European Parliament, Elisabeth Schroedter, who was going to Minsk to take part in a conference on "Transformation or Isolation". The Belarusan Consulate in Brussels banned an entry visa to Belarus. Ms. Schroedter is member of commission on connections with Belarus, Moldova and the Ukraine and is the first western politician, who was banned entry to the country. She participated in human rights rallies in Brussels, which were recently organized near the Belarusan Embassy in Brussels. In the press release, distributed by the Green Members of the European Parliament, is said: "The prohibition made by Lukashenka's regime to Elisabeth Schroedter's entry in Belarus – is a provocation not only against European Parliament which entrusted Mrs. Schroedter to make a report on the problem of future relations between EU and the whole democratic society and Belarus". This incident was regarded by tne European Parliament as an accident and for that in Brussels was raising another scandal. As a result, somebody of the Belarusan Embassy gave a call to Schroedter's office and said that she could get a visa any time she wanted. Eventually the Member of the European Parliament arrived in Minsk.

On November 26, at the custom in Brest the Belarusan participants of the presentation "Belarusan opposition-98" the leader of the Human Rights Center "Viasna-96" Ales Bialatsky and the deputy chairman of the BPF "Adradzhennie" Yury Khadyka after the belonging search were seized independent issues and personal papers. The head inspector A.Kurash confiscated from Bialatsky the English variant of "The Right for Freedom" (50 issues) the survey "Human Rights in Belarus" (January-September, 1998) made by the Human Rights Center "Viasna-96", press releases of the Center "Viasna-96", as well as the thesis of A.Bialatsky report, which he was to deliver in Warsaw. The thesis of Khadyka's report as well as personal papers were confiscated. Inspector A.Kurash commented on his actions and said this printed materials has to be examined to clear if there is any material which threatens the honor and dignity of the President of the Republic of Belarus, to the sovereignty and the present constitutional regime of the Republic of Belarus.

On November 27, the delegate of the 13 Supreme Soviet Andrey Klimau, who has been in Minsk prison already for 10 months was allowed to meet his wife Tatsiana and his daughter Alena, who had completed 4 years on that day. The parliamentarian and businessman has not changed his views on the investigation. A.Klimau still refuses to participate in any investigation activities: he answers no questions, reads no reports.

On November 28, in Brest, near the cinema "Belarus" there was a picket, organized by the Free Trade Union. They demanded to increase the standard of living. The people were holding the following slogans: "The plants are out of control, the prices are free, the shops are empty" "Our demand is to raise the minimum wages up to 100 dollars", "TV to Trade Unions!"

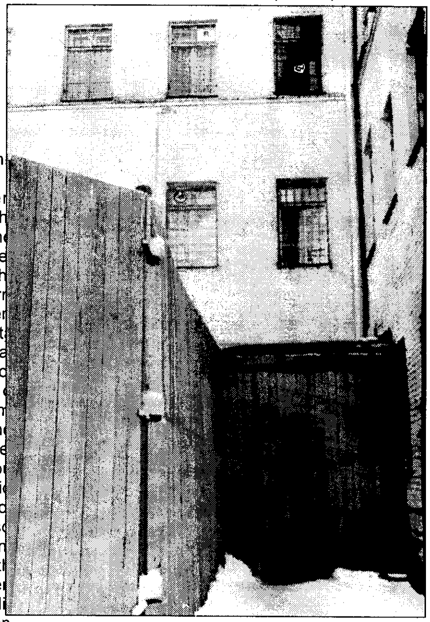
On November 29, in Slutsk there was a non-sanctioned march. On this day they celebrated the 78 anniversary, of anti-Bolshevik armed rising in Slutsk (Minsk region), it is the most tragic and the brightest page in the history of Belarusan people, struggling against the Bolshevik order. The town authorities officially permitted to stage a meeting dedicated to this event on the stadium. On that day a group of representatives (more than 100 people) of the Belarusan Popular Front "Adradzhennie" left Minsk for Slutsk to commemorate the memory of the strugglers for freedom and independence of Belarus. The BPF representatives visited the memorable places, connected with the events of the armed rising: villages Chyrvonaya Slaboda, Semezhava, Grozau, Vyzna. In Slutsk the column under wite-red-wite flags directed to the building of the museum of local lore, history and economy, which was the seat of the parliament of Slutsk Republic in 1920. The BPF representatives laid a wreath. On their way back, near the stadium they were expected by the police, who aimed to hinder their movement. But the citizens of Minsk got on the buses and left. On December 1, two majors from Slutsk department of internal Affairs came to the headquarters of BPF in Minsk one of them is the deputy head of the National Security Department of Slutsk V. Yu. Aliushin. The majors were looking for G.U.Bankevich, who had organized the trip. On December 4, there were made administrative reports on G. Bankevich and M. Antsypovich.

On November, 30 in Minsk commenced an International Human rights film festival. It was initiated and monitored by the UN mission in Belarus. Deputy Minister Yury Tsvyatkou said that the state is not intended to support and finance this festival.

On November 30, at the court in Kirau district, Mogilov region a lawsuit started on the two times Hero of the Socialist Labour – former director of joint-stock venture "Rassvet" Vasil Staravoitau and on two his employees – Aliaksandr Yaustratau and Aleg Shapavalau. V.Staravoitau is charged with the organizing a bandit group aimed at permanent embezzlement of the state. He is convicted of an attempt to bribe and an illegal possession of arms. The advocates asked to take into consideration the fact that V.Staravoitau was74 year old as well as his health condition. The court declined advocates' petition. In journalists' opinion, A.Lukashenka himself directs V.Staravoitau's punishment.

Navinki





In public transport or in shops when people "clear" their relations one can often hear: "It is high time you went to Navinki" or "Have you escaped from Navinki". In this case they make hints at the Republic mental hospital, (people are used to call it madhouse), which is located in Navinki, near Minsk.

During the period of stagnation any person who had different ideas and was against the policy of the ruling party took the risk of being sent there or to any other hospital of that kind. Nonconformists found themselves in mental hospitals in accordance with Article 55 of the Criminal Code of BSSR, saying that "mentally ill people should be sent to hospital under compulsion". By the way, this article still exists.

Apart from the ill, there is a great percentage of alcoholics and drug addicts in the hospital. Nowadays the public is deeply concerned about this categories of people. Annually more than 3.000 people die of narcotic and alcoholic intoxication.

A nurse of the 32 department says that most of the patients are sent there with the diagnoses "alcoholic delirium" – it is commonly called a delirium tremens. Some of them come there voluntarily, still others are brought there under compulsion of militia officers or medical staff. To bring an alcoholic to the normal state out of delirium, first medical aid is absolutely necessary. For 3-4 days they are placed in quarantine, where they are given droppers and injections. Afterwards they are moved to other wards. The course of treatment lasts for 21 days and it does not prove that the patient can be completely cured during th time.

At the present mome there are 62 alcoholics in th department, but there are n enough places. When the bring somebody at night, h would be placed in the cor dor. Among the people, ther are those who are in hospit for the 10 time. Medicine ha not found yet a cure whic would help people to get rid alcoholic dependence com pletely. Alcoholism poisons n only the body but a soul as w – that is the most awful abo it. In this respect a doctor sai "People become dependent alcohol for hard economic, s cial, ecological, political an there are, of course, many ot er reasons". This departme is represented by people of di ferent social positions: scientists, creative people, entrepreneurs, workers and collective farmers.

An alcoholic – is a young guy, alcoholic, former pilot was dismissed from the army for a bad sight. On his first day in hospital he asked everybody one and the same question about the Balkan Crisis:

- What is going on in Serbia? Our detachments should be brought in to clear Kosava of the Albanians.
- What Soviet detachments do you mean?
- Russian and Belarusan ones. Russia and Belarus are inseparable it is an inviolable nation, an inviolable state.
- But we live in the independent country!
- The independent country is fiction. You will see, in one or two years, we will be together again!

Characteristically, such opinions can not be explained from the fact that these people are out of mind. Such words can be heard not only at the mental hospital – it is the result of mass propaganda, which is constantly broadcast by state-controlled Mass Media.

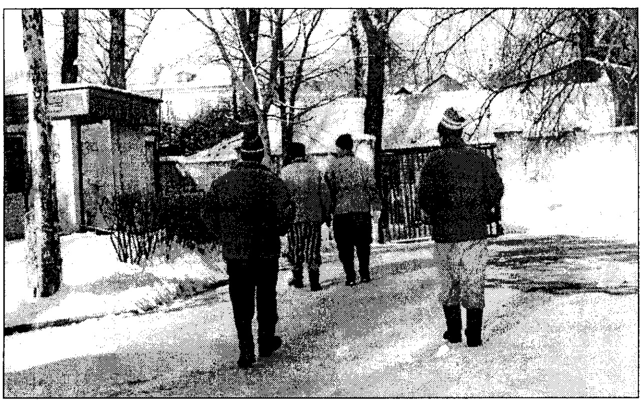
One more victim of official propaganda – is a 30-year-old Valya, brought there by a first aid brigade. She was very aggressive. Medical staff had tried hard to tie her to the bed. She was shouting in a husky voice: "You are all enemies. Lukashenka will come tomorrow, he will untie me but all of you will be tied instead!"

It is very hard for medical staff to work here. By the way it is more difficult work in the women's department than in men's. It can be explained by the fact that alcoholic dependence among women takes its course in a more complicated way: women-alcoholics are more cruel and aggressive, to bring a woman out of delirium takes longer by comparison with men.

Comparing with other departments of the mental hospital, the most part of the day in the hospital is dedicated to working treatment: from 9.30 till 13.30 and from 15.00 till 18.00. Every patient is responsible for a certain amount of work. Somebody washes the floor, others clean the yard or take away the rubbish. Some people work at the farm, feeding pigs. Such comparatively free conditions make it possible for alcoholics who have not finished yet the full course of treatment to start drinking again.

A person who is sent to Navinki is considered to be mad and dangerous for the society. But it is not true. A doctor who works at the mental hospital says: "Every ill may take a full course of treatment voluntarily. In case after the treatment there are no mental deviations, he may forget about the fact that once he was in Navinki.

Mikola KACHAN



By Andrey Melnikau

A TRIP BEHIND BARS



In the future I would have a possibility to be together with two killers in the same cell. They had something similar in their appearances, but nothing of the kind of the killers who are shown in Soviet or Post-Soviet films. In films there is a mythic creature, a killer, depicted in the way the public sees him. In reality they are simpler and closer to us.

One day of quarantine contributed to my knowledge of the prison. Cell-sharers were not the beginners in prison and by watching, listening, if possible, by asking questions I began to realize "the notions" – unofficial way of living in prison. I chattered, as I understand now, a lot, sometimes producing the impression of being very naive. To some questions I was answered than "at home" (in the cell) I would be shown, told and taught everything. As they understood, the beginners should not make a lot of noise, should observe and comprehend the life step by step, gradually. The information I got during the "quarantine" confirmed.

There are three blocks at Grodno prison. The first one – is investigating. There are mainly people who are not found guilty. There is a "quarantine" here as well. The second block is for convicted. In this block there are people who wait for being sent to the "zone", to the "chemistry", for the results of the commission, for the re-trial or "krytchyki". "Krytchyki" it is people who are in prison in accordance with the verdict or are moved from the zone as hard criminals because it is very dangerous to keep them in the zone. "Krytchyki" work in the workshops as well – they make coffins.

The last block – is "household", or "balandziorsky". "Balandziory", these are people whom the prison authorities use on household purpose (to cook meals, to tidy the buildings, to carry newspapers, a bath-house and other household chores). To be such a person is considered to be disdainful among the criminals. In case "a balandzior" is sent to the zone, he will be faced with a lot problems. "A balandzior" is equal to "activists" (people, who collaborate with the authorities).

A prisoner who lives in accordance with "the rules" does the time from the very beginning to the end. Ticket of leaving is possible when you collaborate with cops. Theoretically, it can be bought. Ticket of leaving for a prisoner, who lives in accordance with "the rules" is possible just under amnesty. Waiting for amnesty is one of the eternal topics of discussions among the prisoners.

The basic term of "rules" is movement. Any prisoner, wherever he is, must find possibilities to establish "movement", to carry on the principle of consolidation successfully. It aims at getting to know about the prisoners and at helping each other if necessary.

"The movement" is established on the way. Having made the "route" – it means to discover the "harbour" of other prisoners with the help of "a rifle" or "a arbalets" – you may start "to race horses": to draw a rope with a "malyava" (messages) and with buttons (often with tea and cigarettes) – the main "currency" among prisoners, but in principle there may be any thing that can squeeze through the grille (bars on the windows), through "panorama" (sewerage): medicine, blocks of soup, "a pig", sugar, sweets, "marachky" (handkerchiefs), performances (erotic pornography) and others. Most of the buttons are packed in cellophane.

It is considered to be shameful not to support "the movement". "The house" which shows no consolidation is said to be "frost-bitten". The most primitive means of supporting "the movement" – are the talks through the "cup" (a wall) through "the bars" and "panorama" (when you draw the water out of sewerage pipe, acoustic facilities show you to great advantage); leaving messages in the walking yards and writing on all possible surfaces in the places most frequently visited by the prisoners.

All actions, connected with "the movement" are prohibited by the prison authorities. A wrong-doer may be deprived of the next parcel. But the warders in prison take these parcels for their needs, that is why this means of punishment is unpopular at the Grodno prison.

In the evening my cell-sharers make a "route" with the upper neighbours. An Anzhela directs the "movement" from there in an Amazon voice. We expect huge and tasty "buttons", but nobody knows whether they were too big or "the horse" was too weak, but as a result – the rope was broken. But it is possible that "balandziory" could have broken it. To make it shorter, we were left without presents.

"A balanzdior" brings some bread for a day – half loaf of black and a quarter of white per capita. A ration is cut and is given through a "feeding-rack". We place them on the plates of bars (across the bars there are not wires but plates several santimetres long) or on the upper plank-bed, covered with newspapers. After may day talks about Belarusan human rights defenders, Valera remembers that a month ago a number of representatives of "Amnesty International" visited the Grodno prison. One of the guys spoke too much. After their departure the "cops" made him "stretch" (you are to stand with your legs apart and by beating you with a truncheon you make the spits). It happens that it lasts for several hours. That guy spent a lot of time in bed afterwards and urinated blood. He will not be talkative any more. By this execution, the prisoners realized that "Amnesty ..." won't be able to change the situation in Belarusan prisons.

They ring off. The prison is filled with cries: "Good night" and the corresponding "beacons" – knocks at the walls, ceiling and the floor of neighbours till the rising time. The warders are allowed to open the cell doors only under the command of the "owner" (the head of the prison) or his assistant on duty.

I made myself on the upper plank-bed. There is also a "helicopter" – an additional plank-bed between the upper circles of plank-beds. It's allowed to put at night.

I relax. It is cold, but little by little I fell asleep. I hear somebody eating downstairs and leaving a part of food for those who are sleeping. I hear Valera saying about me: "To be in zone for him is like finding oneself on another planet".

(to be continued)

(Continuation. Beginning in №№ 15-17)

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